

# Gender



## History

There have been few studies concerning women in Ethiopia, but many observers have commented on the physical hardship that Ethiopian women experience throughout their lives. Such hardship involves carrying firewood and water over long distances on a daily basis, grinding corn manually, working in the homestead, raising children, and cooking. Ethiopian women traditionally have suffered sociocultural and economic discrimination and have had fewer opportunities than men for personal growth, education, and employment.

Over 85 percent of Ethiopian women reside in rural areas, where peasant families are engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture. Rural women are integrated into the rural economy, which is basically labour intensive and which exacts a heavy physical toll on all, including children. Land reform did not change their subordinate status, which was based on deep-rooted traditional values and beliefs. An improvement in economic conditions would improve the standard of living of women, but real change would require a transformation of the attitudes of men regarding women.

**Empowering women through  
value chain development: Good  
practices and lessons from IPMS  
experiences**

## Introduction

Even though Ethiopian women make a significant contribution to the agricultural sector, as women in others parts of the developing world, they usually have no or limited access to and control over important agricultural resources such as land, livestock, farm implements, capital, knowledge and information, which constraints their role and contribution to production and marketing of agricultural commodities.

Due to unequal power relations and limited visibility linked to a number of social, cultural and economic factors, women tend to be ignored or marginalized in many development interventions. Policy, program design and information systems are still primarily directed at men. A recent review of 271 World Bank projects by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), for instance, found that, when projects address the needs of both men and women, the sustainability of project outcomes increases by 16% (Quisumbing and Pandolfelli, 2010). Unless deliberate measures have been put in place to provide women all the required information, knowledge and skills in improving agricultural productivity and marketing initiatives, it is unrealistic to expect sustainable agricultural growth.

This document reports on IPMS experiences of gender mainstreaming to reach women to increase their access to resources, technologies and knowledge which could consequently improve their economic and social status. It presents a number of strategies employed and specific cases thereof to illustrate the outcomes and challenges associated. Findings are based on studies undertaken by the IPMS gender research team and Research and Development Officers in 10 pilot learning woredas (PLWs) located in 4 regions of the country.

## First step

In rural households, in addition to the constraints facing them, in general, in terms of accessing information, inputs and services, women farmers are also highly dependent on male

relatives for decision-making processes. Furthermore, women tend not to have the same types of social and knowledge networks as men making it more difficult for them to find the right resource at the right time.

The basic tool used by IPMS to increase women's participation in training, field visits and other interventions in value chain development is setting a specific target. Over the years of the projects implementation (2006-2010), about 36% of women farmers were reached through the capacity building activities in project sites. Clearly, targeting women means empowering them for their economic independence and enhancement of their participation in social and economic development of their communities.

IPMS started early on to train women in group formation, leadership skills, and negotiating skills which also strengthens women's decision-making role in the household, in farmer groups and local associations. IPMS also attempted to increase women's participation in market-oriented agricultural production. Women were encouraged to organize themselves in groups to produce priority commodities and facilitate collective marketing so they generated higher volumes of products for the market and command a stronger bargaining power in the market.

## Identification and promotion of technologies suitable for women

Culturally, important households' resources such as land, traction animals and farm implements are entitled to men. Moreover, women are also traditionally prohibited to perform cultivation using animal traction. As a consequence, female headed households who own farm land with traction animals to draw the plough have to either hire men labour for cash or exchange their oxen for labour to produce agricultural products.

It is therefore important to tackle such cultural barriers through the identification and promotion of appropriate technologies.

## Conservation tillage

Conservation tillage, made possible through the use of herbicides, is one of the technologies demonstrated through training and field days in Bure PLW as a labour saving technology both to men and women in order to minimize labour and time required for frequent land preparation and weed clearance.

All land in Bure and Metema woredas is ploughed three to four times prior to planting, using a pair of oxen, and followed by a final ploughing to cover the sown seeds. Usually, the head of the household ploughs and another man broadcasts the seed.

However, the majority of female headed households either owns only one ox or has none and is therefore seriously hampered by this tradition/practice. Thus, conservation tillage certainly brings a ray of hope to women who are now able to use non selective herbicide which minimizes weed infestation and the women's and family labour requirement for weed clearance. Because under conservation tillage, all the pre-broadcast ploughing is replaced by spraying (performed by men); only the ploughing to cover the broadcast seed remains.

*"After the couple's training, it was easier to adopt the new approach because we could make the decision together. As a result of the training, I have become more involved, especially regarding the spray mix and the preparation of seed for planting". Ababayehu Adam, Bure*

This also helps women to minimize their labour requirement as they are supposed to hire or lend labour and oxen only once as compared to the traditional agriculture which is 3 to 4 times per one crop cycle. They are not forced to share out or rent out their land. This also has a considerable impact on saving women's time for other productive activities. Eventually conservation tillage helps women to benefit from their lands in many ways. Drawbacks could be that



livestock would get less crop residues to feed on as, in many systems, crop residues are an important component of livestock feed and conservation tillage entails purchase of herbicides which need secure input supply and cash to purchase.

IPMS in collaboration with the woreda OoARD introduced the conservation tillage to the woreda and organized training for couples. It also organized field demonstration to farmers including the female headed households.

### ***Breaking the mould through women's ploughing***

Ploughing with oxen is culturally known as a man's activity in Ethiopia. The gender baseline information collected across 10 PLWs also confirmed that women are not involved in drawing the plough using oxen traction while they can prepare land using hand tool implements for hoeing. This tradition is a threat particularly for female headed households who do not have grown up sons and men relatives. Furthermore, women in female headed households usually own fewer livestock than men and than women in male headed households (Torkelsson and Tassew 2008). Thus, female headed households who have a considerable size of land with the minimum required number of traction animals cannot utilize their potential to produce agricultural commodities for consumption and market to their level of potential.

Considering this fundamental problem, IPMS in collaboration with the woreda OoARD and Women's Affair Offices explored the opportunity of breaking this norm and started giving

### **Strengthening enterprises traditionally undertaken by women**

Even if men are generally the key players in crop and livestock production, and are the principal beneficiaries in terms of control over the income generated from the sale of the commodities, there are some deviations from this general trend in which women take part in the production of some commodities and earn benefits from their sale. For

instance, poultry production and marketing is predominantly a women's activity in Ethiopia.

All across IPMS pilot learning woredas, the gender analysis revealed that commodities like poultry and dairy are some of the commodities where women either dominate the workload and income or dominate the workload but share the income with men.

In order to increase women's engagement in the commercialization of agricultural commodities, IPMS in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) tried to increase the productivity and marketing of poultry and dairy production through the introduction of new technologies and market linkage and targeted women deliberately to make sure that they were not marginalized.

Poultry production does not require a lot of land and capital. In addition women possess animal-raising skills honed by years of living in a rural area. Poultry is also a source of self-reliance, since poultry and egg sales are decided by women and provide them with an immediate income to meet household expenses such as food. It is therefore important to actively involve women in the process of poultry improvement.

### ***Introduction of technologies for poultry***

The gender baseline survey undertaken by IPMS revealed that women are responsible for most of the production activities such as hatching, rearing, hygiene, feeding, watering, protection and egg collection. They also control the income from the sale of eggs and chicken except in Bure and Alaba where both the workload and the income are shared between men and women. Though poultry are reared for market in all PLWs where more than 50 % of the produce is sold, chickens are produced at small scale level and in a traditional way. Producers tend to rear low productive local breeds which require lower levels of management. As a result, women earn low income from the enterprise.

Considering this problem, the project strived to improve the productivity and the marketing of poultry production through the introduction of various technologies depending on the specific need of the locality. Raising a day old chick was one of the technologies introduced in Dale woreda where the public poultry chickens supply system to urban and periurban farmers is unable to meet with the ever growing demand for commercial egg layers.

#### **W/o Abeba: an innovative farmer**

Abeba was working on men specific duties like ploughing farm lands, and harvesting crops with close acquaintance of her father. She also played football, volley ball, and other sports with equal competence to male students in school. As a result, her teachers and students appreciated her in all activities. On the other hand, some of her friends and farmers in the village said that she was 'Yesetlij kollete' (out of our culture).

She followed a women's training in Bure, then discussed with her husband on ways of improving their income and livelihood. After some time, they acquired land through renting and crop share system and cultivated 2.25ha of land in 2009. This enabled them to produce 30 q maize, 6 q wheat, and 12 q pepper in 2009. In the next year (2010), they produced 35 q maize, 15 q wheat and 10 q of pepper. This produce has given a total revenue of 24,000 birr per annum including all expenses.

This increased income came from the integrated effort of both husband and wife. She helped him in oxen ploughing, sowing seed, going to market. On his side, he also helped her in managing the child, making a traditional wot and collecting fuel wood, collect and manage chickens in the evening and even washing clothes and house utensils.





### Going forward with poultry management

W/ro Radia Tomsisa is one of the eighty women targeted for raising day old chicks in Dale. One year ago IPMS trained women in her area on poultry management which she was part of and after eight months she was provided with fifty seven days old chicks. To take the chicks she had to make 150 ETB initial payment. Her husband, her older son and her contributed 50 each and took the chicks. The chicks were fully grown by two months and seven days. After 67 days she sold the 49 chickens at 40 to 45 birr and paid back her 1300 birr loan. She made a net profit of 700 birr and she gave 200 birr each to her husband and son because they helped her with the initial payment and she took 300 birr because she was the only one who was taking care of the chickens. With her 200 birr she bought a goat and her son bought a 'tiga' (calf). The chicks which were provided to her grew faster compared to the local chickens she was used to raising.

*Supporting the development of traditionally women-dominated commodities like poultry is a good entry point.*

The out growers' scheme was initiated by IPMS and the woreda /district office of agriculture in consultation with 80 women. Each woman was supplied a hay brooder box with a runner, 50 day old chickens and enough feed

supply to last three month on credit. Village level training and continuous technical support was provided by the woreda office of agriculture and IPMS. Women vaccinated their chickens under the guidance and supervision of regional and woreda veterinarians. These chickens were sold to 173 periurban producers and 400 rural households. Generally on average each woman/hh received on average gross income of Birr 1071.78 in three months. Identifying women as a new link in the value chain as input suppliers, in this case pullets, and women themselves vaccinating their chickens was not either thought possible or else was not taken seriously.

*Women organized in groups and backed by a sound business plan could successfully serve as a new link in the poultry extension as suppliers of pullets and knowledge transfer for sustainable market oriented agricultural development.*

### Improving the productivity of dairy

Demand for milk and products appears to be rising in the recent years across PLWs. Dairy is another marketable commodity where women have close engagement in the production and marketing of products. It is the women who sell milk and butter and control the income from dairy products.

Unlike many projects in the woreda, it is the first of its kind which mainly focused on women since they receive the loan and totally own the enterprise. It has improved their esteem and received attention from extension service. However, the community rears the indigenous breed that produces very low milk in open grazing systems, probably because of very limited awareness about improved breeds and their availability.

As a consequence, the introduction by the project of crossbred or improved dairy breed and supplementary feed potentially increased women income and the productivity of the dairy sector. Feed being the major limiting factor,

*In Bure, the Dairy Cooperative established by IPMS currently has a total of 38 members, 3 female and 35 male. One of the aims of this association is to link members to a market (milk collection center) which can purchase the milk at a remunerative price.*

there should be expanded research on animal feeds and feeding in order to assess the quantity and quality of locally available feed.

### Promotion of technologies and commodities requiring lower amount of resources

Women have no or limited control power over the important agricultural resources such as land and farm tools, it is their husbands who administer the land and decide how to use it and what to produce on it. The majority of marketable commodities such as grains and vegetables require relatively large size of land and it is practically impossible to engage women from male headed household for such agricultural commodities while it is relatively easy to target women from female headed households who have better access to and control power over their land holdings.

But in order to increase women's engagements in producing and marketing of agricultural commodities, it is important to focus on commodities which do not require large size of land. Backyard fruit and poultry production were identified as enterprises that do not demand large and lumpy inputs, and therefore are suitable for women given their resource constraints.

Considering these aspects, IPMS has introduced improved fruit seedling production in Goma, Dale and Bure which can produce hundreds of seedlings in a small plot of land at the backyard and women were targeted for this particular intervention. One drawback, however, among others, is that different fruit varieties introduced to Goma PLW by the community itself were from unknown sources or with no information regarding

### **Fruit seedling production**

*In Goma, six model farmers (3 females, 3 males) were trained and engaged in grafting avocado and produced 2,052 grafted avocado seedlings from internationally known varieties such as Hass, Ettinger, and Fuerte which were sold to 163 households in 28 Peasant Associations (PAs) at Birr 25 per seedling. The farmers earned Birr 42,000 among them in total. The three female farmers were engaged in the fruit nursery operation but all activities were shared with their spouses. One of them was used to farming activities outside household chores, but two of them were not involved in farming activities before. Since their engagement in fruits seedling production, these women started to work directly in farm activities, such as collecting soils, filling polybags and making shades with their spouses. Regardless of the additional workload, all the female operators expressed their satisfaction in the intervention.*

their management and thus constraints such as failure to set fruit, extended periods on fruits setting, unmanageable height, diseases, pests, etc. were very common. For major fruit crops such as avocado, minimum fruit setting takes seven years and above which is a very long time for a smallholder farmer.

### **Increase women's participation in commodities where they share responsibilities but not reward**

Capacity building is really what increases women's responsibilities when it comes to sharing benefits. Technical skills in respective fields whether fruits production, seedlings supply, apiculture will bring knowledge and power to women who in turn will have a stronger say regarding income decisions.

Other support such as provision of credit, access to input supply and market linkage have been facilitated to targeted women to ensure that they are able to engage in the business and control income they earn.

### **Fruit production and marketing**

Though there are some site specific differences among PLWs, fruit production including papaya, mango, avocado and banana is a shared activity in Atsbi, Alamata and Goma while in Dale and Buremendo most of the work. In all cases, women contribute considerably to the production of fruits, usually for market. There is a gender difference in selling and controlling the income from the sale of fruit depending on the volume of the production and mode of marketing. If

the production is at small scale, women tend to sell and control the income. If the volumes produced are higher and a good market linkage is established, merchants tend to buy it from the farm gate and men tend to take over the marketing activities from women.



However, in Alamata, only women sell the fruit, either to private traders or directly to consumers in the market, and they control the income. In Dale, men are responsible for harvesting and marketing; the produce is usually sold at the farm gate to merchants or middlemen and the income is shared.

### **Small ruminant fattening**

In Goma, women are involved in almost in all sheep production activities either together with their husbands or alone. Women along with their husbands engage in rearing, feeding and day to day management and are also solely responsible for maintaining hygiene and dung collection but they are excluded from selling and controlling the income from sheep. Thus, the project attempted to devise ways that would help women benefit from the sheep development

scheme. It planned to target 120 farmers for developing sheep fattening business through promoting economic feeding of small ruminants and thereby generate income for their families. Fifty percent of the participation was targeted for women farmers to see whether their access to and control over resources could be increased. However, the project ended up with only 32 % women participants.

*The project delivered the training on sheep management to women in innovative ways. The training was organized in a place selected by the women themselves. In order to increase their attentive participation in the training, it was delivered at a convenient time of the day, chosen by the women, so that it didn't interfere with their daily routine activities. Along with the introduction of the new technology (supplementary feeding of sheep in Goma), women were given training on the technical skills and the knowledge required in managing sheep fattening using the new technology packages. The hands-on trainings were supported by practical demonstration and supplemented with experience sharing events.*

As women generally have limited resources including cash to purchase material inputs, the value chain development initiatives of IPMS aimed to improve access to and utilization of relevant and proven technologies by women through providing them credit. And since the microfinance organizations require a project proposal that establishes the feasibility and economic viability of the enterprise for which loan is being sought to ensure repayment, IPMS project and the Goma woreda OoARD assisted the community in the preparation of credit proposals which helped the women avail the loan and engage in the business. The project channeled 233,000 ETH Birr to 120 farmers for sheep fattening scheme development through Oromia Credit and Saving Institute (OCSI). Women contributed 10% of the credit fund as a down payment to demonstrate their willingness and commitment

IPMS and partners also facilitated linkages with the input suppliers for the women and men farmers in Goma, as



### Kedija Yasin: the fruit seedlings producer



W/o Kedija Yasin is a 36 years old married woman who has 6 children. Her husband was an accountant with a monthly salary of 350 Birr but lost his job in 2006. While she was in search of any income generation activities, she was approached in 2008 by IPMS and BoARD for grafted fruit seedling production. She got a 5 days training in grafting techniques along with other farmers in Melkassa agricultural research centre which is about 450 km away from where she lives. Immediately after the training she prepared herself to engage in the seedling production and planted the root stock using all the knowledge she obtained from the training. In the following year, she grafted 300 avocado seedlings using the scion supplied from Melkassa but only 50% of the grafted seedlings were grown successfully. According to Kedija, the scion taken from Melkassa lost

its moisture on the way through, which explains the low success rate. She also mentioned that it will not happen again as she has planted 4 mother trees (one from each variety-Hass, Fruitte, Eteger and Bakan) that can be used as her own source of scion for the future. After two and a half years, she got 10 kg of avocado from one of the mother trees and used the fruit for consumption. In December 2010 she sold about 300 improved grafted avocado seedlings at 25 Birr per seedling and earned 7500 Birr. From the sale of grafted seedling she bought a heifer at 600 Birr. In addition to that, she engaged also in the producing improved coffee seedlings which are resistant to CBD (coffee berry diseases) by cutting propagation methods. She now covers her children school expenses, clothes and other household expenses.

*"The knowledge and the skills I got make me and my family confident enough to make money and secure our livelihood. Everyone in the village was aware of our situation when my husband lost his job. That is why many farmers, both men and women, are interested in my achievement"*

### Misku: Sheep sale brings recognition in the community

Misku Abafaris, is a 42 years old farmer with high school education who lives in Goma woreda. When she was in 9th grade, her marriage was arranged with a farmer from the community and she now has five children. Misku and her group members are involved in sheep fattening, received five sheep each on credit and they were trained on sheep fattening and rearing by IPMS/MoRAD. After two years, she was able to sell 12 sheep in two cycles. Misku appreciated the technology used, because she was able to fatten her sheep in a much shorter time compared to the traditional one. She played a key role in the sheep fattening integrating with other farming and domestic activities. As a result she is taking care of everything in the household, and makes decisions in the house with her husband. And because of her involvement in the sheep sale, she was able to control the income from sale. Misku said "I am not waiting for my husband to give me money for household or any other expenses, this is a change for me". Her success and the additional income have made her also famous in her community; she was awarded for her good performance in sheep management at a ceremony organized by MoRAD and IPMS. Misku won the competition and was given one quintal of concentrate (feed). She was very delighted because her work brought her more than money, "recognition in her community".



generally women have limited exposure to the public and outdoor activities and are constrained in accessing inputs (local feed resources, supplementary feed and health management for sheep business development).

However, it was found to be very difficult to get the intended number of women participants during the selection process. Male farmers expressed openly that they were not very comfortable with women taking an equal lead in this initiative. On a number of occasions many of the male farmers were seen intimidating female farmers saying "let them sign the agreement and collect the money from the lending institution but we will see how they will payback the loan". More than five meetings were held to encourage more women to join and finally the number rose to 48 women farmers. However, gradually 10 of them dropped out due to various reasons and only 38 female farmers registered to take part, making it about 32% of the total targeted number.

## Explore opportunities for women's participation in men-dominated commodities

There are commodities which strictly keep out women in either the production or marketing processes. Many historical, cultural, physical and other reasons hinder women's engagement in the commodities. So it is so important to explore that limitation and devise some measures to deal with those limitations.

### ***The introduction of modern beehives changes the scenario***

Traditionally women were excluded from the production and marketing of honey in many parts of the country. One of the reasons for this restriction is that in the traditional beekeeping system, the beehives have to be hanged on the tips of the tree branches. Men are perceived to be physically fit to climb the tree and put the beehives at the

right place. Secondly, in the traditional bee keeping system the beehives are preferably kept in the forest which is not safe for the women to cross alone.

However, in the modern bee keeping system, the modern and the transitional beehives can be kept around the homestead near the ground, under shade. Here women can potentially manage the day to day management of bees and engage in the business as long as they are provided with the necessary knowledge, skill and resources for the production and marketing of honey.

In Fogera woreda, to improve women's participation in apiculture production and marketing, IPMS project, together with partners, initiated a couple training. Couple training is very important to adopt since it improves the household level decision making process. As a result, women's participation increased following the training. The field assessment also shows that, though

there are still cultural influences, the trend of women's involvement in beekeeping has been improving through time with effective back up from field workers in the village.

According to many beekeepers, the new beekeeping technologies are very easy to be handled by women compared to traditional hives. Women's involvement in top-bar hive technologies is very high as plastering of the hive, fumigation, protecting the colonies from ants and spiders; internal inspection, etc. can be easily taken care of by women. Even in the absence of their husbands, instead of asking neighboring men for help, they can easily harvest the honey.

So far, however, the marketing channel for honey from modern hives is poorly developed, resulting in a price differential. Better linkages for honey need to be developed. Also skill development opportunities (training and study tour) given to women is almost nil (in Bure notably).

### ***Encourage women in feed and forage development***

Intervention on feed in the rural areas, like forage development, either in the backyard or in grazing land has a significant effect on women's income. Mainly because at the household level the feed developed is directly given to lactating cows which leads to an increase in the milk production, thus increasing the butter production. As it is the women who churn the butter and sell it, they also control the income from butter in all PLWs.

### ***Encourage women to produce large ruminants***

Cattle are kept mainly for sale in all pilot learning woredas. Typically, rearing cattle is a male dominated enterprise, though there are activities shared by men and women in some sites, such as hay making in Metema and Fogera, fodder collection in Mieso, breeding, feeding and day-to-day management in Ada'a, it is men who sell the fattened cattle, bring them to the market and control the income from the sale.

#### **Elfresh: model beekeeper in Ada**

W/ro Elfresh Dermeji from Ada district has learnt bee-keeping from her family and when she got married at a young age, her father-in-law worked as a bee-keeper for land owners in the area. Four years ago, Development agents (DA) approached her to train on apiculture and she accepted, got trained on modern and transitional beehives, bee forage and supplementary feeding. She also learnt how to keep the beehives clean and how to keep the bees from running away by providing them water near their hives.

She was provided with credit and paid off her loan. Apart from apiculture, W/ro Elfresh works on the field, holds 4 ha of land and has rented 3 more and cultivates beans, teff, wheat and peas. She has 2 cows, 6 sheep, 2 chickens and 4 donkeys.

She used to have 3 traditional beehives, now she has 9 transitional beehives, 3 modern beehives and 4 traditional beehives. She produces honey twice a year. Last year she has produced 210 kg honey and sold it at 40 birr per kg. She says apiculture is very easy, one has to watch the beehives carefully, keep them clean, prepare supplementary feeding in the dry season and have plants around so that the bees do not have to travel a long distance and get lost in the process.

She is planning to broaden her modern apiery because she would want to continue with this work in her older days. She is a model farmer and received various equipments as awards.



In Metema where IPMS introduced credit and stall feeding interventions, a group of men and women were trained in fattening large ruminants. Women involved were mostly widows and stall feeding seemed to be attractive to them because the animals (zebus which are preferred by the neighboring Sudanese) were close to home to be fed. After 3 months fattening, the animals gain weight and sell better. However, even though the process of engagement with farmers and traders seemed to be established and there were market opportunities,

many challenges were met: lack of skills and knowledge, livestock diseases, difficulties with quarantine, feed shortage during dry season (despite the available vast communal range lands), weaker export market and limited credit availability to support the business.

## Increase women's access to knowledge about market-oriented agricultural production, services and inputs

### Access to knowledge and information

Accessing sources of information and opportunities for knowledge and skills development are distinct for men and women (Lemlem et al, 2010). This has serious implications for promoting agricultural development initiatives. As it was observed, even though women play a significant role in agricultural productivity, carrying out an estimated 40% to 60% of all agricultural labour (World Bank, 2008a), they suffer from unequal access to resources and capacity-building opportunities on a number of levels. With no regular

updates about new farming practices and few opportunities to develop their skills base, they have to rely on information being passed on to them from their husbands, other men, or ideas gleaned through their informal networks which marginalizes them.

This will affect their productivity and their ability to innovate and fulfil their productive potential. Ultimately it has also an impact on the commercialization of marketable commodities.

Furthermore, as women are traditionally supposed to spend much of their time on household activities, they have limited exposure to the out door/public activities from where there is a high possibility of getting information about the new technologies and ideas.

Similarly, the development practitioners also tend to work with male farmers as beneficiaries since they are the ones who control most of the resources. It is therefore easy for men to implement what they believe is useful to them (examples of trainings aimed at men only since they own most of the land). The project believed that provision of the necessary knowledge and skill is a central component for the success of increasing productivity and effective marketing. While doing so, equal opportunity should be given to women as well as men. In order to break the traditional gender-biased pattern, IPMS took a move to design various strategies which open up options to increase women access to information, knowledge and specific skill in commodity development chains which will eventually lead them to be engaged in producing and marketing of marketable agricultural commodities and empower them economically.

### Importance of venue and timing of training

Women are not only the major source of labour in the agricultural sector and contributor for community related activities but they are also responsible for the vital household's tasks such as caring of children, cooking, fetching water and fuelwood and cleaning the house as part of their household responsibilities. The gender baseline survey revealed also that women have



#### Raso Usman, Feed farmer in Mieso

Raso Usman from Mieso woreda has been involved in forage production for three years. She was approached by IPMS based on her past experience with local breed cattle and forage development. However, as the milk yield was quite low, she decided to switch to a better breed called "Borena". Every family member shared responsibilities in the household and on the field. But Borena cows require more feed to get better yield. So six month ago Raso started exercising the new technology on feed preparation with IPMS and MoRAD. The main purpose of her involvement in the technology was to be capable to feed her animals properly but not to sell at this stage. As a result, she increased her milk production from 1 lit/day to 3 lit/day.

Accordingly she planted forage in one hectare of land intercropped with sorghum; she harvested a lot and was able to feed all her cattle throughout the dry season. With the help of IPMS, Raso also tried MUB (Mollasas Urea Block) preparation at her back yard, but she did not continue, because of lack of molasses and Urea. So she suggested that the materials required for the technology development be available and regular follow up take place to see the technology impact.

Farmers around come to visit her cattle and wonder how she is able to feed the animals considering the cost of feed, but she tells them that if animals are well managed (fed properly, keep their hygiene and drench timely) they fetch a better price and cover their expenses, and she even makes an extra profit.

*"Women are now respected in the community and we have equal say in all decisions because men recognized our contribution to the household and have respect for us."*



longer working time than men. They work for 10-12 hours per day both in the wet and dry season. So it is very important to consider their daily calendar to identify the most convenient time and place while organizing the training.

Unlike the conventional extension approaches, the project delivered the trainings in a place selected by the women themselves, near to their village in the case of Dale, Goma, Ada, Atsbi, Alamata, Fogera and Bure. By doing so a number of women could attend trainings comfortably.

### Couples training

It is often assumed that there is a trickle down of information, ideas, skill and knowledge from husbands to wives. This assumption led to underprivileged women, particularly the married women, not being invited to trainings, meetings and other similar forum. Considering this problem, the project adopted an innovative training approach called 'couples training'.

### Experience Sharing

Experience sharing events are powerful tools to spread new technologies among farmers and effective ways of demonstrating new ways of producing and marketing of certain commodities. These systematic knowledge and skill acquisition events inspire many women



to use new technologies and engage in producing and marketing of agricultural commodities. IPMS experiences showed that the hands-on trainings through practical demonstration study tours and field days enabled many women to manage and master new technologies successfully.

*'Couples' training' is an approach where both husbands and wives get training together. It widens opportunities for women to get the necessary information, skills and knowledge for the production and marketing of agricultural commodities. Partners also understand, assist and appreciate each other technically so that they gradually build up their knowledge together, thereby overcoming the weakness of relying on husbands to pass information to their wives after training. It helps women strengthen their role in decision-making in the household regarding which technologies to use and which marketable commodities to produce.*

*It also helps breaking taboos about the traditional gender division of labour and contributes to bringing about gender equality (N. Alemayehu, RDO and H. Gudeta, RDA, Ada'a Liben PLW).*

### Access to other inputs and services

One possible strategy to counter the discrepancy of access of women entrepreneurs to technical options is to address the main factors that determine access to technologies by improving technology transfer and their utilization by women through providing them credit. And providing credit through the existing microfinance institutes in the area to institutionalize the innovative credit scheme<sup>1</sup> to ensure the sustainability of the approaches.

Though a number of affirmative policies figure in the micro-finance institutes to provide credit services to women, many women could not be benefit from the opportunity as the micro-finance need feasible project proposals which guarantee women can be successful and pay back their loan. Thus, IPMS project together with the respective OoARD in the PLWs assisted the community in the preparation of the credit proposals that could help the women to engage into the business.

Even though micro credit institutions are keen to provide loans to women, many fear to take credit as they feel their knowledge and skill will not enable them to produce commodity for market and make profit. IPMS recognized these issues and tried to reach out women through innovative credit systems.

### Access to market

Technology and inputs utilization can be seen as an opportunity to improve

women's business, leading to increases in production, to new or changed products, or to products of higher quality (Everts, 1999). Such improvement could lead to higher profits and to greater security and autonomy for women. Based on this principle, IPMS increased women's access to new technologies and engaged them in the business of agricultural commodities. Women first faced a lot of difficulties with the purchase, arrangements and negotiation processes until the project arranged the new linkage of the input suppliers with women and other men farmers in the respective PLWs.

Along with the capacity building training and the provision of credit, women are linked with the input supplier either to the private input supplier or the cooperative where women can have their own access to input and technologies. For instance,

*"Through IPMS I have attended training in fruit nursery grafting (along with 10 men) and have received fruit scions and pepper seedlings for demonstration purposes. I also had the chance to join an experience sharing visit when 10 of us (three women and seven men) travelled for 14 days through Ethiopia, visiting IPMS sites in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR. The trip was like a dream. I did not imagine I would ever have the chance to visit these places, given my current status as a widow. I had been out of Bure woreda only once before, to Bahir Dar. On this trip I saw many things that I want to follow up: poultry, fruit and vegetables. I have already adopted some of ideas I have seen, such as urban agriculture techniques." Kassu, Bure*

<sup>1</sup> The credit innovation fund finances innovations in production, input supply, technologies and services not normally covered by the existing lending institutions

Goma sheep fatteners linked with feed suppliers, Dale chicken keepers linked with buyers, fruit seedling producers in Goma, Dale and Bure linked with farmers, dairy farmers in Alamata and Ada linked with dairy cooperatives, etc.

## Conclusion

Any development program or actions including women as major actors will have a higher chance of success in improving livelihoods, fighting food insecurity and poverty alleviation.

While women are central to Ethiopian rural development, they typically receive an unequal share of the economic benefits from their efforts, an inequity particularly visible in the commercialization of agricultural commodities.

This IPMS project adopted calculated strategies in an attempt to ensure that a significant number of women targeted by the project benefitted from value-chain development. The project was more successful in some woredas than in others, but those in the project believe that the following ten recommendations stemming from this project apply broadly to the rural Ethiopian agricultural context.



## Ten top recommendations for women's rural development in Ethiopia

### 1 Change mindsets

Men and women both, and at all levels, need to change their traditional ways and to begin to actively involve women in Ethiopia's rural development. In particular, professionals and other figures of authority, and women as well as men, tend to not see the full potential of Ethiopia's rural women.

### 2 Provide incentives

Make increasing women's participation in trainings and skill development be part of the development agents' evaluation criteria.

### 3 Set high but realistic gender targets

At the beginning of development projects, set high but realistic targets for the numbers of women to be reached and involved in the projects.

### 4 Work with men and women together

Include both heads of households in all gender development work so that men and women together can learn and give each other support in increasing household income, which should then give them both real incentives for increasing the decision-making power of the women.

### 5 Take a stepwise approach to gender issues

Projects targeting women should focus on commodities such as dairy, small ruminant production, poultry raising, bee keeping and backyard fruit production, which have traditionally been the province of women; as their incomes rise, they may then take on other even more profitable production systems such as cattle fattening.

### 6 Tailor training for women

When designing capacity building work aiming to enlarge women's participation in markets, take into account that women often lack the time, confidence, skills and networks that make it possible for them to participate in the training. We need to provide hands-on training at times and venues convenient to women



and to link them with input suppliers and markets.

### 7 Facilitate services

By linking actors along the value chain and facilitating private sector and rural entrepreneurs, government agents will spur Ethiopia's commercial agriculture.

### 8 Scale out successes by adapting them to particular contexts

Agricultural interventions and options that work in one place will often not work in another unless the approach to the innovation as well as a given technology is adapted appropriately to the new context.

### 9 Change self-perceptions

Help women to see that they are a vital link in the agricultural value chain. As in many other parts of the world, rural Ethiopian women typically view themselves more as farm labourers than as household providers and income-earners. To change this will require women accessing more and better-quality information and higher caliber networks as well as other women serving as entrepreneurial role models.

### 10 Link women to markets

Create opportunities that will involve women as well as men in market-led agricultural activities by, for example, bringing them into relevant discussions; attending to their concerns, needs and ambitions; and ensuring in particular that those ready to enter markets have the links and tools they need to do so.



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